

Assessing Your Practice for Electronic Health Record Adoption

The Maryland Health Care Commission (MHCC) is working collaboratively with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) on the Electronic Health Record (EHR) Demonstration Project to help physician practices successfully implement and adopt EHRs. If you are considering implementing an EHR and have not completed an assessment of your practice, you should review the EHR readiness assessment tool (tool) developed by the Doctor's Office Quality –Information Technology program (DOQ-IT) that examines a practices' readiness to implement an EHR. The tool is located on the MHCC website at: <http://mhcc.maryland.gov/electronichealth/ehr/cchitehrvendors.html>

The tool allows the practice to perform a self evaluation and assess the level of readiness in implementing an EHR. With a more accurate view of your level of preparedness, your practice can design or provide focus on an implementation plan that meets the specific needs of your practice. The tool is easy to use, and your practice can use this as a guide that assists you and your staff during the various stages along the implementation process.

The readiness assessment tool is divided into four sections: *Organizational Culture, Management and Leadership, Operational, and Technical*. Each section addresses a series of criteria regarding a practice's level of readiness, and categorizes the response into one of three stages of readiness: *highly prepared, moderately prepared, and not prepared*. The tool will identify those areas where a practice can place additional focus or resources to help move those criteria from *not prepared* or *moderately prepared* to *highly prepared*. While the goal for the successful implementation of an EHR is to be *highly prepared*, the practice should review each criteria defined as *not prepared* or *moderately prepared*, and determine if it is necessary for the practice to resolve this criteria, or circumstances unique to the practice that allow it to move forward during the implementation process. The practice should be objective and fair in assessing its level of readiness, and conduct periodic reviews of the readiness assessment to make adjustments to its EHR implementation process.

The following provides a breakdown on the criteria for each of the four sections in the readiness assessment tool follows.

Organizational Culture section examines the involvement of staff and patients:

- What is the overall perception of an EHR?
- What is the physician involvement in selecting and implementing an EHR?
- What is the staff involvement in selecting and implementing an EHR?
- What is the patient involvement?
- What are the plans to improve the patient experience in implementing an EHR?
- Is there a communication process that addresses patient interaction and editing of information?
- Is there a project plan with milestones, timeline and deliverables?

Management and Leadership section reviews the management and leadership involvement and planning in the EHR adoption process:

- Does the practice have an Executive team and are they involved in the process?
- How does the practice view the cost of the EHR and is there a budget for purchasing the EHR?
- Is there a strategic plan?
- Is there a quality improvement plan?
- Is there a care management component that looks at quality measures?

Operational section considers the day to day operation of the practice and the changes that occur when implementing an EHR:

- Has the practice addressed workflow redesign and defined the processes needed to address the new workflow?
- Is there a care management strategy that explores improving patient outcomes through care management?
- Are there security policies and procedures in place?
- What involvement does the practice have in managing the vendor relationship?
- Has the practice addressed staffing plans needed during implementation?
- Has the practice addressed training plans and programs necessary for staff during implementation of the EHR?

Technical section analyzes the infrastructure, integration of existing technology, and the information technology (IT) staff needs for the implementation:

- Has the practice examined their current systems to integrate them into the EHR implementation process?
- Has the practice identified any new hardware needs, and do they have a plan to purchase and install the new hardware?
- Does the practice have an IT staff, and has the staff been appropriately trained on the EHR?

Please feel free to contact Ms. Kathleen Francis, Chief of Health Information Exchange, by phone at (410) 764-5590 or by email at kfrancis@mhcc.state.md.us with any questions you may have regarding the CMS EHR Demonstration Project.